

Minutes
Coastal Resources Committee
Brasstown Valley Resort
Salon 1-2
6321 US-76
Young Harris, GA 30582

December 6, 2017

Attending:

Committee Members

Nancy Addison, Chair
Rob Leebern, Vice Chairman
Aaron McWhorter
Bodine Sinyard
Miki Thomaston
Philip Wilheit
Dee Yancey

Board Members

Duncan N. Johnson, Jr., Chairman
William Bagwell
Dwight Davis
Dwight Evans
Ray Lambert
Mark Mobley
Brother Stewart
Philip Watt (via conference call)

Guests

Clay Jones
John Poole
Kevin Jeselnik
Hutton Baewn
Jen Hillburn
Debbie Phillips
Todd Williamson
Caleb Williamson

Staff Members

Mark Williams
Kyle Pearson
Wes Robinson
Cathy Barnette
Amber Carter
Artica Gaston
Dave Crass
Rusty Garrison
Eddie Henderson
Doug Haymans
Becky Kelley
Steve Friedman
James Hamilton
Bill Donohue
Eric Bentley
Thomas Barnard
Jeff Weaver
Richard Dunn
Lauren Curry
Jac Capp
Jeff Cown
Karen Hays
Chuck Mueller
Laura Williams

The December 6, 2017 meeting of the Coastal Committee was called to order by Chairman Duncan Johnson.

Chairman Johnson called on Nancy Addison, Chairman of the Coastal Committee.

Ms. Addison called on Doug Haymans, the new Director of the Coastal Resources Division, to congratulate him on his new position and present a briefing to the board.

Mr. Haymans thanked the board for their vote of confidence in him and said he looked forward to working with them in his new role. He stated his briefing would be about regulation changes regarding cobia fish regulation and gave some background information on the fish from over the past five years, including average size, age, and migration and spawning patterns, including fishing rates gathered from anglers. He then discussed the management of the fish, which is split between the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Council and the South Atlantic Fishery Council, which is further divided at the Georgia-Florida line. In regards to the Atlantic migratory group, Mr. Haymans stated that it is based from the Georgia-Florida line and extends northward to New York. He expressed concerns that states such as North Carolina and Virginia have more than doubled their catch limits of cobia as established by the current ACL. Since this fishing takes place mostly in state waters, the South Atlantic Fishery Council is unable to enforce catch limit rules, as they only have jurisdiction in federal waters. To counter overfishing, the Council voted to cease fishing of cobia in federal waters. He mentioned that The Atlantic States Commission adopted a complementary plan to the one created by the South Atlantic Fishery Council, and Georgia must submit its implementation plan by January 1, 2018 and have it approved and enacted by March 1, 2018.

Mr. Haymans continued by presenting Georgia's proposed implementation plan. The plan establishes a cobia fishing season of March 1 to October 31 and, per currently established rules, allows the Commissioner to halt all fishing for up to a six month period. It also calls for a change to the minimum size limit for a catch from 33 inches to 36 inches. The plan lowers the individual catch limit from two cobia to one and the vessel limit to a maximum of six cobia per vessel for vessels with six or more anglers aboard. Lastly, the plan mandates that a rule regarding commercial fishing of specific federally managed species be reworded to include all federally managed fish species. The rule states that commercial fishers can operate regardless of species during the open fishing season.

Mr. Haymans stated the plan will be open to public comment starting on December 7, 2017 and will be open until January 8, 2018. The plan will then be brought back for final action at the January board meeting and will be effective on March 1, 2018.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.